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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: HAMAS-LED CABINET TAKING SHAPE

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During a March 19 meeting in Gaza with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmud Abbas, Hamas PM-designate Isma'il Haniyyah presented Abbas with a list of cabinet ministers for the next Palestinian government. The Palestinian media, citing unnamed Hamas and PA sources, has identified 24 ministers. The projected cabinet ministers consist of a mixture of Hamas PLC members, technocrats, and independents. At least five have received a university education in the U.S., and at least two have taught at U.S. universities. The cabinet does not include Fatah or PFLP members. The list includes one female minister (Women Affairs) and one Christian minister (Tourism). Although PA presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudaynah told the press that the cabinet would be brought before the PLC for approval following the March 28 Israeli elections, there is also word late on March 22 that Hamas is seeking to schedule a special PLC session for March 25 to vote on the proposed cabinet.

¶2. (C) The following biographic information -- based on information from the PLO, Palestinian media reporting, ConGen Fatah contacts, and Hamas-affiliated websites -- is an unconfirmed list of cabinet members in the Hamas-led PA government:

Prime Minister and Minister of Youth and Sports:

-- Isma'il Haniyyah (Hamas): The moderate, public face of the Hamas Gaza leadership. Haniyyah served as chief of staff for Hamas founder Shaykh Ahmad Yassin. Haniyyah is a refugee from the Shati camp and received a BA in Arabic Literature.

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

-- Mahmud al-Zahar (Hamas): A doctor by profession with a medical degree from Cairo's Ayn Shams University, al-Zahar was in the ninth slot on the Hamas national list. His frequent public statements emphasize militant activity to a greater degree than PM-designate Isma'il Haniyyah.

Minister of Interior:

-- Sa'id Siyam (Hamas): A Hamas PLC member from Gaza City, Siyam is a prominent Hamas political leader and a primary spokesmen of the movement's Gaza leadership. He appears often on Arab media outlets. Siyam, who received a BA in Islamic Studies and Mathematics, has been jailed by the Israel and the PA at different times.

Minister of Finance:

--Omar 'Abd al-Raziq (Hamas): From Salfit in the West Bank, 'Abd al-Raziq won a PLC seat on the Hamas national list. A Ph.D. graduate in economics from Iowa University, he is

currently a professor of economics at al-Najah University in Nablus. Imprisoned by Israel several times, 'Abd al-Raziq was released from Israeli administrative custody in March following his arrest in December 2005.

Minister of Health:

-- Basem Na'im (Hamas): A doctor of internal medicine and surgery at Dar al-Shifa Hospital, Gaza's main hospital. Na'im received his medical degree in Germany. Active in mid-level Hamas political structures in Gaza, Na'im also heads a Hamas medical association and is on the board of the Palestinian Medical Forum Institute. His seventeen-year-old son, reportedly a member of the military wing of Hamas, was killed in an IDF operation in Gaza during the Intifadah.

Minister of National Economy:

-- Ala-Eddin al-Araj (Hamas): Born in Gaza in 1964, al-Araj received a BS in Civil Engineering in 1987 from al-Najah University in Nablus. Head of the Palestinian Contractors Union in Gaza, al-Araj is also a member of numerous engineering and business associations, and serves as chairman of the board of several construction companies. Al-Araj served prison time in Israel from 1991-1993 for Intifadah-related activities.

Minister of Social Affairs:

-- Fakhri Turkman (Independent): A member of the previous PLC from Jenin, Turkman is an independent Islamist with a BA in Sociology and MA in Education.

Minister of Prisoner Affairs:

-- Wasfi Qabaha: Born in 1959 in Barta'a village near Jenin. He received a degree in civil engineering in 1984 while studying in the U.S., followed by an MA in water resources management in Ireland. Qabaha is head of the civil engineering department for the Jenin municipality. Qabaha has spent a total of six years in Israeli jails, and was last incarcerated in 2002. He is married with nine children.

Minister of Education and Deputy PM:

-- Naser Eddin al-Sha'er (Hamas): Al-Sha'er, age 45, is currently the Dean of Islamic Studies and Law at al-Najah University in Nablus. He received a Ph.D. in Middle East Studies at Manchester University in the United Kingdom where his dissertation was a comparative study on the role of women in Islam and Judaism. Al-Sha'er was a research scholar on religion and democracy at New York University and published several books and papers on gender, globalization, and human rights within religious higher education.

Minister of Information:

-- Yusif Rizqah (Hamas): From al-Burayj refugee camp in Gaza, Rizqah holds a Ph.D. in Arabic Literature and currently lectures at Gaza's Islamic University where he has previously served as Dean of the College of Arts and Student Affairs. Although an active member of Hamas, Rizqah is not viewed as a key decision-maker in the movement.

Minister for Women Affairs:

-- Maryam Saleh (Hamas): Saleh, who won a PLC on the Hamas national list, holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from Um al-Qura University in Mecca and has published works on legal and political issues relating to women and Islam. Saleh resided for 22 years in Saudi Arabia before returning to the West Bank in 1993, and has since worked at al-Quds University. A Ramallah resident, Saleh is also a member of several women and charitable societies.

Minister of Justice:

-- Ahmad al-Khalidi (Technocrat): A political independent, al-Khalidi is a noted legal expert and respected academic.

He is Dean of al-Najah's Law School. Al-Khalidi also heads a committee of legal experts responsible for drafting the Palestinian constitution. No reported ties to Hamas. He is a member of the PLO's Palestine National Council.

Minister of Telecommunications:

-- Jamal al-Khudari (Independent): A PLC independent from Gaza City who won his seat with support from Hamas, al-Khudari received a BA in electrical engineering. Member of a Gaza engineering union, he has also served as chairman of the board of trustees of the Islamic University in Gaza and as a board member of Paltrade.

Minister of Transport:

-- 'Abd al-Rahman Zaydan (Hamas): Zaydan, age 45, is a Hamas PLC member from Tulkarm. He received his degree in civil engineering from the University of Alabama in 1985. He works as a supervising engineer to PEC DAR projects. Arrested by Israel in 1993 on suspicion of ties to the Hamas military wing in the northern West Bank.

Minister of Tourism:

-- Tannus Abu Eitah (Christian): Abu Eitah, age 57, was born in Bayt Sahur near Bethlehem. A Palestinian Christian with strong ties to the tourism industry, Abu Eitah is director of the Paradise and Shepherd Hotels in Bethlehem. A political activist, Abu Eitah has been arrested by the Israelis on several occasions during the first Intifadah.

Minister of Culture:

-- Attallah Abu al-Sabeh (Hamas): Raised in the Rafah refugee camp, al-Sabeh received his basic education at UNRWA schools before graduating in 1969 from Ramallah's Teachers Training College majoring in science and mathematics. He then worked at UNRWA schools until 1984. Al-Sabeh, who ran unsuccessfully for a PLC seat for Hamas in Rafah, received a Ph.D. in Islamic Law in Sudan and currently teaches at Gaza's Islamic University. He was Dean of Student Affairs at the university from 1997-2001. A contributor to the Hamas-affiliated newspaper al-Risala, al-Sabeh has gained further recognition as a preacher in Gaza mosques. A founder of Hamas in southern Gaza, al-Sabeh is considered a hardliner. Israel has detained al-Sabeh on five different occasions.

Minister of Housing and Public Works:

-- Ziad Thatha (Hamas): Thatha, age 51, is originally from Gaza and received a degree in civil engineering from Alexandria University in Egypt. He is deputy regional engineer for UNRWA and member of the Palestinian Engineers Union in Gaza. He is also involved in many charitable and social projects.

Minister of Religious Affairs:

-- Nayef Rajub (Hamas): From Hebron district, Hamas PLC member Rajub received an MA Degree in Islamic law. Brother of former PA Presidential Security Advisor Jibril Rajub. He comes from a prominent family in Dura village near Hebron. He served more than 13 years in Israeli prison. Nayef has been a Hamas activist since the early 1990s.

Minister of Planning:

-- Samir Abu Eisheh (Hamas): Abu Eisheh, age 46, is originally from Nablus. He received a Ph.D. in Urban Planning from the University of Pennsylvania and has previously served as a visiting professor at universities in the U.S., Germany, and France. Abu Eisheh was also a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the University of Washington in 1999. Currently serving as Vice President for Development and Planning at al-Najah University, Abu Eisheh has served as a consultant to several Palestinian universities and

institutions. He has published two books and 60 articles and research papers related to planning.

Minister of Labor:

-- Muhammad al-Barghouthi (Hamas): Born in 1968 in Kobar village near Ramallah, al-Barghouthi received a BA in Mathematics and Computer Science and MA in Business Administration from al-Najah University. Arrested several times by Israel during the first Intifadah, he spent approximately five years in jail for being a Hamas leader in the Ramallah area. Al-Barghouthi is the head of the Islamic Charitable Society in Ramallah.

Minister of Agriculture:

-- Muhammad Ramadan al-Agha (Hamas): Al-Agha, age 47, was raised in Khan Yunis. Received a Ph.D. in Environment and Water from Manchester University in the United Kingdom and has worked as a professor at the Islamic University in Gaza since 1982 where he is head of the Environmental Studies Center. Served as a visiting professor at Bremen University in Germany, Manchester University, and in the U.S. at the University of Virginia. He is a fellow at the American Society for Science Advancement, member of the American Federation of Geophysicists, and member of the British Geology Scientific Society. He did not run in the PLC elections, but reportedly has ties to Hamas.

Minister of Jerusalem Affairs:

-- Khalid Abu Arafah: Born in Jerusalem in 1961, Abu Arafah received a BS in Chemistry and a BS in Electrical Engineering from the Technology University in Baghdad in 1983. Between 1987 and 1993, Abu Arafah worked as a technical manager for a Palestinian food distribution company and currently owns a business in Jerusalem selling construction materials. Head of public relations for the Silwan Charitable Society, Abu Arafah is also a member of several Jerusalem-based religious and charitable societies. With close ties to Hamas, Abu Arafah has been arrested by Israeli authorities on five separate occasions between 1981 and 1995.

Minister of Local Government:

-- Issa al-Jabari: Al-Jabari, age 40, is an engineer by profession with a BS degree in Chemical Engineering from Jordanian University in 1990. Also holds a BA in Islamic Education from al-Quds Open University in 2002. A businessman from Hebron, al-Jabari is general director of a family-owned industrial trade firm in Hebron. Member of the board of directors from 1991-1996 of the Islamic Youth Association in Hebron and member of the board of directors for the Islamic Charitable Commission from 2000-2005. Not a member of Hamas, al-Jabari has been arrested by Israel on four separate occasions between 1993 and 2004.

Minster of State Without Portfolio:

-- Dr. Atef Odwan (Hamas): A Hamas PLC member from North Gaza, Odwan received a Ph.D. in political science in the United Kingdom. He currently teaches at Gaza's Islamic University. He has published numerous books on political theory and international relations and is a frequent lecturer in Gaza mosques. Former advisor to Hamas founder Shaykh Yassin. A member of the PLO's Palestine National Council, Odwan has served time in Israeli prisons and was expelled to Lebanon by Israel in 1992.

Cabinet Secretary, Council of Ministers:

-- Muhammad Awad: Awad, age 45, is currently Vice President of Information Technology Affairs at the Islamic University in Gaza. A professor of engineering, Awad was Dean of the Engineering College at the university from 2003-2005, and Dean of Planning and Development from 2001-2003. A member of several engineering associations, Awad is also reportedly a member of the American Engineering Association.

